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Harvard Comes in From the Cold

CAMBRIDGE—So seldom is the vexing relationship between the national security and the private society handled with responsibility and tact that the rare success deserves note. Here is how Harvard now plans to get along with the CIA.

The Senate's Select Intelligence Committee reported last year that, while secret CIA financing of American universities was halted in 1967, covert operational use of individual American academics was still rife: Several hundred people in over 100 institutions were providing leads, making introductions and assisting in propaganda.

Such self-restraint as the CIA practiced in campus dealings, the select committee found, arose from a fear of being unmasked, not from a concern for the integrity of the academy. But—and here is the niceness on the Senate's side—the committee decided that legislation would be intrusive and unenforceable. It called upon the academic community to police itself.

To push it along, Sen. Charles Mathias (R-Md.) called a half-dozen college presidents together. Senior staffer William Bader briefed them. And the other day, Harvard responded. It became the first university to accept the

committee's charge and produce guidelines to control the associations of an academic community with the intelligence community.

Written by four men (Archibald Cox, Don K. Price, Henry Rosovsky, Daniel Steiner) at home in the intricacies of the government/university tie, the guidelines start from the premise that intelligence is a valid activity worthy of academic support but that the connection "must be structured in ways that protect the integrity of universities and the academic profession, and safeguard the freedom and objectivity of scholarship."

The drafters lacked the information to size up the full dimensions of past Harvard-CIA activity and they chose not to offer value judgments on it. It was enough, they figured, to deal with the current-day situation.

Against their reluctance to restrain the individual activities of members of the academic community—a notoriously prickly crew—the drafters balanced the responsibility they felt to set standards reflecting a campus consensus and to protect the university.

The guidelines themselves are quite simple:

- Harvard as an institution will continue to make contracts for unclassified research. The contracts will routinely be made public.
- Individuals can continue to contract to do research—and to be debriefed by the CIA after foreign travel. These contracts must be reported to the appropriate dean.
- Academics who recruit for the CIA should tell their dean. Recruiters must inform a prospective recruit before passing his name to the CIA. (The recruiting guideline reveals the existence of a CIA practice on campuses that was not mentioned in the CIA-edited Senate report.)

- Taking part in intelligence or propaganda operations is out.

"We recognize that our recommendations, if adopted [and President Derek Bok did adopt them], may make it more difficult for the CIA to perform certain

tasks," the drafters wrote. "This loss is one that a free society should be willing to suffer. We do not believe that present relationships between the CIA and the academic community, as outlined by the select committee, can continue without posing a serious threat to the independence and integrity of the academic community."

Campus reaction, as I measured it in a quick sweep across the Yard, seems to be that of approval. The fire is out of the CIA issue at Harvard and most other campuses.

Morton Halperin, director of the Project on National Security and Civil Liberties in Washington, expressed delight with the new guidelines, which, he says, are similar to those currently being developed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

At the CIA, which received a courtesy copy, a spokesman said the agency is "seriously considering" whether to respond to Harvard, though no response was sought. Current internal CIA regulations permitting the agency to recruit for operations "any consenting adult" are at odds with Harvard's new guideline forbidding its people to take part in operations. Will the CIA respect the Harvard guidelines and back off? The spokesman indicated that the agency is chewing on the question. He noted that the guidelines constrain Harvard, not the CIA.

Regardless of how the CIA finally comes down, the guidelines represent, I think, a conscientious effort by a university to fill a policy vacuum wisely left by Congress. The result is sensitive at once to the demands of the larger society and to the values of the academic community. Other universities, please copy.